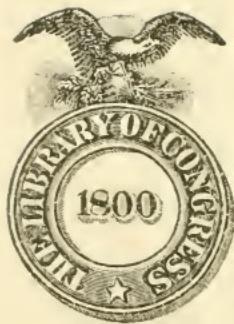


My Galahad Of the Trenches





Class 1570

Book 9

Copyright No. 1135

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

My Galahad of the Trenches



Lieutenant Vinton Adams Dearing.

Born, January 2, 1896.

Killed in Action, July 18, 1918.

My Galahad of the Trenches

Being a Collection of Intimate Letters of
LIEUT. VINTON A. DEARING



NEW YORK

CHICAGO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON

AND

EDINBURGH

Copyright, 1918, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

1570
9
135

Printed in the United States of America

JAN 17 1918

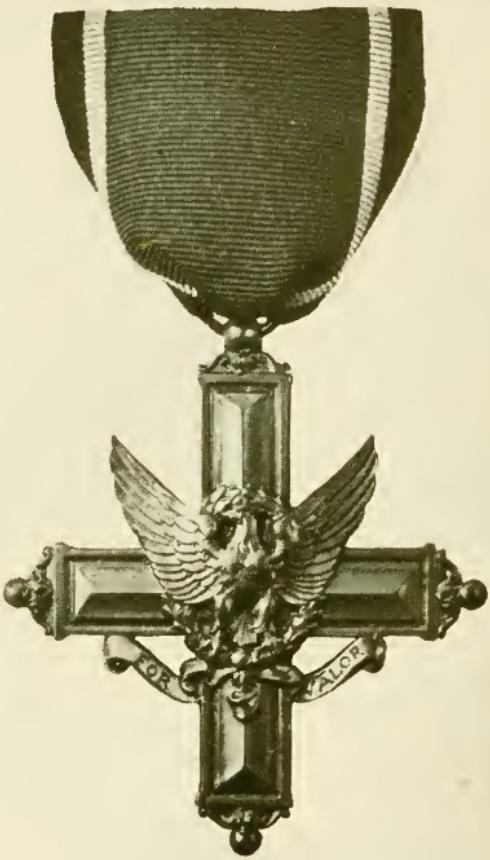
New York : 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago : 17 North Wabash Ave.
London : 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh : 75 Princes Street

Pric 75¢ net

©GIA512066

Dedicated to Mothers

*who have given their sons to fight and die
for the highest ideals of faith and truth,
and who for the sake of their heroes and
the cause for which these young heroes
gave their lives must keep a good heart,
be of good courage and "keep smiling"*



Extract of Gen. Pershing's Commu- ni^{que} of August 26, 1918.

Lt. Vinton A. Dearing: "detailed in command of a carrying party on 28th of May, 1918, near Cantigny, France, he bravely proceeded under fire to execute his mission, and by his example of bravery heartened his men who were under fire for the first time. On 29th of May, 1918, he took his party through heavy shelling to carry ammunition to the front lines without being ordered to do so."

For this Lieutenant Dearing
was awarded the Distinguished
Service Cross posthumously by
Gen. Pershing.

Introduction

THESE letters from my Galahad of the trenches were not written for publication. They were written to me, his mother, and to two or three of his friends, in all the privacy and intimacy of very deep and wonderful relationships.

My reason for giving them to the world is that they may bless the mothers of sons over-seas who may read them, and may perhaps teach some would-be soldiers the articulate expression of love. For like a golden thread through them all, runs the love of a high-hearted soldier who went forth to do battle for his mother and all who meant so much to him, and gladly gave all for his ideals. It is just that quality in these letters that makes them shine like stars on a dark night, in this sick and sorry time.

In order that the letters may be understood and appreciated, I must give a little

sketch of the life, which, though ended at twenty-two, has touched and blessed in three continents every one whom my boy met.

Vinton Adams Dearing was born in Yokohama, Japan. There he lived until he was sixteen, except for two furloughs in Boston—the first time when he was three, and again when he was twelve. At our home in Yokohama where we lived on the edge of the East, and where his father was a well-known man in educational and religious circles, Vinton and his elder brother Henry met, constantly, men and women of culture and high purpose from all over the world. They were never excluded from the dinner-table where questions of great moment in eastern matters were daily discussed. So they grew up in an atmosphere of worldwide vision and cosmopolitan interests. But more than that; in the sweetness of the family life, in intimate, loving communion with their father and mother, around the open fire, or on the sweet, sunny lawn of our home, at 75 Bluff, in the house or garden, at play, study or work, they drew in with every breath the wonderful love of home and

family, and the expression of that love, that comes out so plainly in these letters from Vinton.

I used to think that Vinton was the most adorable little child in the world. He gave out affection as naturally as the sun gives out light. His dear red head was never far from his mother if he were in the house, and his expressions of affection were unending. His love showed itself in constant thoughtfulness. A dozen times a day, his eager young voice would be heard calling up the stairs, "Anything I can do for you, mother dear?" "Any errand I can go on for you, father?" Little love notes were sent upstairs by the amah as surprises. Or I would find a little love-token pinned to my cushion, and the pet names and expressions he used filled my soul with joy. He was none the less a *real* boy, loving play, having scraps with his elder brother, throwing himself into competition and sports with all his heart, but never forgetting the tenderer, sweeter, gentler things of life. He was full of fun, also—the kind that makes fun for other boys, and yet through it all, always a gentleman with de-

lightful manners and a quiet reserve which never left him.

At sixteen he came home from Japan to join his elder brother at Colgate University, leaving an empty place in our home which we tried to fill with precious memories of him. His letters during his four years of college life showed the boy growing into a man, reaching out to high ideals of leadership and service, yet always in his own estimation falling short of the goal he had set.

Those letters were very precious to us, for though Vinton was a quiet boy and developed slowly, we realized that he had in him the making of an unusual man—that he was being prepared for some great work in the world. He entered into college life with all his heart, loving his books, his sports, his fraternity-life and his friendships. Every one loved him, for his gentle sweetness and his great sincerity and truth. It was during these college days that he earned the name I have used in the title of my little book—"Sir Galahad." Over and over again women who knew him, girls who associated with him, quite unconscious that any one had ever

called him by this name, would dub him "Sir Galahad." His knightly qualities of soul and his gentle deference and thoughtful attentions to all women placed him in the Hall of King Arthur's Knights—the most knightly of them all.

We came home from Japan in 1916 and joined our sons at Colgate, startled and delighted at the change in the boys we had not seen for four and six years respectively. Vinton was a junior, Hal just graduating. The months that followed were full of startling events. First, our eldest son was sent to London in training for banking in the Far East. The boys' beloved father was taken from us while giving a course of lectures at Colgate University. Then, when Vinton felt he was his mother's mainstay, came the gathering of the war clouds. I knew my boy well enough to know he would want to enlist, but with all my heart I rebelled. I had not as yet risen to my privilege and duty. I tried to anticipate what I knew was coming, by asking him not to enlist before telling me. Later I begged him if he felt he must go, to go as a Y. M. C. A. worker or to enter

into some safe Government work on this side.

But there came a day when I realized my mistake. One morning early in May I took up my pen, and with the tears rolling down my cheeks wrote,—“My darling Vinton : I want you to go, and you go with my blessing. Mother.” I had not put the letter into its envelope when the bell rang, and there in my doorway stood my great, tall boy, with his suit-case in his hand and a new look of heroic determination on his face. “Oh, Vinton,” I said, “this means just one thing.” “Yes, mother,” he replied, “I had to.” For answer I put the little note, which was not even yet dry, into his hand. There was no need of any further words between us. So college days were over and my precious boy left the kind of life he loved, and turning his back on home and mother, went away to camp to become a soldier. I will not speak of the hurt in my heart except to say that it was very deep and very keen, for I had not then learned to be a soldier’s mother. I will not speak of disappointed hopes, for we three who were left had planned a home in the Far

East as nearly like the dear old home of the boys' childhood as possible, and our dreams were shattered.

Vinton was sent to Madison Barracks in the R. O. T. C. The letters from camp were very interesting. Like most American boys, he had never had any military training, and I fancy it took him some time to attain a military air, but whatever he undertook he did with the determination to win out, so his three months at Madison Barracks developed him into a soldier. Most of the men were college men, and Vinton often wrote that it was more like an intercollegiate meet than a camp. He was very happy at first, but as the end of camp approached and scores of men were being rejected each day, his agitation lest he too be sent home was intense. The result was not what he hoped. He was recommended for the second camp, and after a blissful week together at his aunt's beautiful home by the sea, he went to Fort Niagara to complete his training, feeling more confident of himself, and with the same dogged determination to win out. This was the second parting.

At Fort Niagara he was especially trained in leadership, and through his letters I could see how high an ideal he had set before him. Donald Hankey's "Beloved Captain" he read and reread, and those high standards entered into his soul. In November he got his commission. He was given his choice of a Second Lieutenantcy Infantry, in the Regular Army, or a First in the Reserves. He chose the former, though it meant going over seas perhaps at once. When my new officer son came home from his second camp I went into the South Station to meet him. It was early morning and in his grand new uniform and overcoat, he looked to my proud eyes the most wonderful officer in the whole United States Army! The first question I put to him as he sat eating breakfast in the South Station restaurant was, "To what camp will you be sent now, Vinton?" His answer so unexpected and terrifying sent a shudder right through me. But I smiled back into his loving, tender eyes, though my heart was breaking, as he answered: "To an embarkation camp, mother dear."

Then for five exquisite weeks we had our

soldier at home and what a precious time it was! We did not talk of the parting, we lived in the joy of a glorious comradeship. Every day was a red-letter day from dawn to close, and at the end, no matter how late, he would come and lie down on my couch for a quiet half hour's talk before he went to bed. We shopped for his equipment, like two young things buying household furniture. We teaed and supped at funny little restaurants in town. We made many calls together. Vinton, like all officers on leave, was feted and admired by his girl friends, and the evenings were often spent at parties which gave him the touch of gaiety he had been without at camp. But best of all were the delightful times by our glowing fire with a few friends, sometimes alone, but always gloriously happy in each other. In both our minds was the spectre of the parting, but we spoke of it not at all, and one morning, gloomy and dark and wet, a little party of four motored into the South Station to bid him "good-bye." We had promised ourselves not to weep, although that clutch at the heart was stifling us.

We had had our last talk at home, and the last big hugs that were too big for any one else to see. There was grandmother who begged to go and promised not to shed a tear; there were his two best girl friends and his mother. We stood in a little group trying to be gay, and succeeding. Then the last long kiss, and we watched our tall soldier glide out of that dusky, dirty station, and saw his wonderful smile illumine all its darkness, and knew he was going forth to battle for us, and turned away, and let our breaking hearts have their way. But he went with his mother's smile, and over and over he has told of his appreciation and gratitude.

How well it is we do not know the future! I believed with all my soul that my boy would come back to me even as he went, beautiful as the morning, strong with the strength of ten, a glorious soldier, my Galahad, my love-child. But he lies in sunny France, and a little wooden cross marks his resting-place, and next spring the poppies will grow on his grave, and he is not coming back.

In writing this sketch I feel it will not be complete without a word of loving appreciation of the father of this remarkable boy. Dr. John Lincoln Dearing, whose name is revered and loved throughout the Far East as a "great missionary statesman," and as the "Apostle of Coöperation," lived and died so heroically and gloriously that it is little wonder that his son was the hero that he proved. The same strength of character, the same mighty soul living for his ideals and dying in the carrying out of those ideals, the same indomitable purpose, and the same broad conception of duty, these are seen in the son as in the father. The missionary father won no decorative cross from his Commander, yet in a very real and definite way he bore the cross for twenty-seven years in Japan, and he won the victor's crown as truly as did the son win his Cross on the field of honor.

It is the spirit of the old motto of "*No-blesse oblige*" that worked out in my two heroes. They both died as they had lived—victoriously. And Vinton crowded into his six months in France as much as would or-

dinarily be crowded into a lifetime. A boy of twenty-two, recommended by his Major, cited by Major-General Bullard, chosen as one of the staff officers in the great Bastile Day parade, awarded the Distinguished Service Cross by General Pershing, placed among the "heroes of the great war,"—such is his record. The day before he fell in the second battle of the Marne, on the Paris-Soissons road, July 18th, the great day of victory, the turning-point in the whole war for freedom, I received his last cabled message. It came from the glowing soul of a valiant hero, mindful to the last of her whom he loved. It simply said, "Keep smiling. Love."

MARY HINCKLEY DEARING.

My Galahad of the Trenches

HIS LETTERS

At Sea.

DEAREST MOTHER :

After two days of being seasick, and you know what that means, I am beginning to feel much better. I don't know whether it was the vacation or what that made my stomach so susceptible. We have a fine bunch of officers on board of whom I know ten or eleven. The average American officer we meet is what Coningsby Dawson calls a "civilian in uniform."

Yes, we are really on our way, and it was a strange sensation as we left port to see the faces of the different men, partly wistful, partly eager, with the knowledge that they were really starting. And then there was the small group of people to see us off, just rough workmen and steamship agents, and

yet there was an expression in their faces that will remain in my mind a long time as they waved good-bye, especially one man, a one-armed guard, who saluted and smiled at me as the boat slowly drifted out. Then there was the confusion of getting our state-rooms and meeting the men, but as yet we haven't found out much about each other, due to the fact that we were not in condition to do so. When we came opposite Boston, how I wished I could fly there and say good-morning. I could see you and grandmother having breakfast and including me in the blessing. I do need it, and more and more as the days go by. I have a wonderful month to remember, however, and it will always stand by me, especially the last two nights when Louise and Peggy and we two alone were there respectively. How perfectly wonderful you were to me all through my vacation! You were far too good. I have been reading from Tennyson on board—tell Peggy this—and I wrote you about Louise sending a copy of Browning to me, didn't I? Oh, think, I shall have to go days now without a letter from you, but the very fact that

you are thinking of me is encouragement in itself. A fact like this doesn't have to be written, I know, although it is nice to say it in writing. I do a lot of thinking about you, and I am so glad I had all that long period at Cambridge with you. It is strange the different sensations you have as you arrive at different stages of the game, but one thing, I have no qualms of conscience, and I did have them at college occasionally when I felt I was not getting enough out of it to make it worth father's paying his money for me. Now I feel I got the best out of college except that I was too protected and did not come into contact with the rougher element, a thing I shall have to learn now. I am just as proud of you as I can be. You surely were a wonderful mother to let me go the way you did. I hope you can see me come back some day with my Sam Browne belt on, some stripes and a change in rank, who knows. Our boat is dark at night, the portholes are closed, smoking is prohibited, and the salon shaded with blue lights, almost dark enough to prohibit reading and almost everything else. It is going to be a hard

struggle, but I have absolute faith in the final outcome. It is great to be living in this age and to be in the midst of it. The thing now is to be a countering force rather than a "shave-tail" lieutenant. Thus our ambitions increase; at first just the thought of enlisting, then of getting a commission, then of getting to France, and now of doing something in the struggle that may be worth while. How is grandmother? Give her my best love. Tell her I think a great deal about her, and tell her she has got to keep just as young and good-looking as ever, so when I get back we can go to see another play together. And I know you will do it for my sake and you will not worry about dangers, for I may not be in them and you know it is worry that makes you grow old. I have had some serious talks with fellows I am most intimate with and it helps me to get another's view-points of matters, especially their ideas as to how they will come in contact with men under them. I must close with heaps of love.

Always your

VINTON.

At Sea.

DEAR PEGGY:

I am going to take advantage of you right from the start, and so this will be a continuous letter to the end of our journey whenever I feel like writing. Oh, how many things flood my mind, especially when I walk out on the deck alone, and all is dark except for the light of the moon shining down full and strong. Then I think of Cambridge and mother and you, and maybe I wish I were there a little bit too. I begin to see things in a strangely different light from what I used to, and yet I am so blind to some things. My eyes are in a way untrained to see things, to see the under-currents where the water runs evenly along. I am always too willing to be satisfied with the oiled surface. In a way it saves you a lot, but it isn't the best or most wholesome. I have done a great deal of thinking since I have been on board, and I realize I have a long way to go before I am prepared to take charge of a group of men in a life and death matter. But I feel that my heart is right, and that goes a long way. It is the daily thoughts

we think that insure us victory or defeat, and I begin to realize that more and more strongly. What a wonderful thing our mind is and how easily we tamper with it and get it out of order without the slightest regard to the fact that some day in a storm that mental compass of ours may guide us safely through, or we may have got it so out of gear that we are dashed upon the rocks. You wouldn't think it, but I am sitting on deck in a steamer chair with the boat rolling quite a little, but feeling fit. Your little Tennyson has been a Godsend, and others have asked to borrow it already. I love it for its own sake and a great deal more because you gave it to me.

You don't know how glad I am that I am here, that I really may be of some value, and the only way is to be master of all the different branches of service. I have thought often and often of mother on this voyage. I hope she hasn't worried unduly. She is a wonderful mother. I feel so proud of her that she sent me off as she did. Give my regards to all the family. As I look over this vast ocean I see you and others back

of me and it gives me a feeling of do or die.

Lovingly your brother,

PINK.

Somewhere in France, February 3.

DEAREST MOTHER :

I haven't reached my final destination yet but I am on my way, and in the meantime living through lots of strange and lasting experiences. The farther you go into it the more you realize the meaning of this war, and the fine uniforms gradually grow less important. Here you see tall troopers in stained uniforms loaded down with gas masks and other paraphernalia, but they come up with snappy salutes, which is more than you can say of those you see on Fifth Avenue or Boylston Street. Last night some English officers passed through straight from the front, and it was quite a sight to see our fellows gather in little groups about each of these war-worn veterans and listen to their words of wisdom. They had some pretty interesting tales to tell. Coming across the channel was the coldest night I ever spent. We had no beds and one very small cabin

which was piled full of officers. There was no sleeping, and most of us suffered from the cold up on deck, but that is just one of the things that build up our experiences. We came over with all kinds of troops. There were Australians and English and Americans and lots of others. Just to hear them talk is great. Here in the officers' lounging room, half full now with English, half with Americans, it is a remarkable sight. You are constantly in my thoughts and heaps of love go in this letter to you.

February 4.

PEGGY DEAR :

You can't imagine under what strange circumstances we have been living the last few days. My impressions of France certainly are different from what I expected them to be. You see travelling the way we do we have the worst side of the country displayed to us, and I imagine we reciprocate equally. I spent a few wonderful moments, however, when we stopped at a certain town, in an old cathedral. They were having service there and the choir was chanting. We wan-

dered around and were in a new world for a few minutes. Every one is in mourning here, and every man is in uniform. The French country is beautiful from a train window, but after travelling a day or two in the same little compartment and eating tinned stuff in the same place, it loses its power to interest us and we realize how dirty we are. Just as in a novel one chapter after another gradually brings you nearer the final plot of the story, what the final outcome will be is yet to be solved. Believe me I realize what some of the things are that I am running up against, and it is such an easy matter to calm your conscience over here. I begin to see where a man has to really do some mental fighting, but I shall try to be a help, for I have people like mother who expects great things of me. Here I am using you already, but you have been a tremendous help in more ways than you can realize. Our real work will begin now in a very short time, I imagine. I don't know what it will be but I am eager to get into it.

Always your fond brother,

PINK.

February 18.

DEAR LOUISE:

There are so many things I would like to write you, but I can't because I censor my letters. To me one of the saddest sights that I have seen was yesterday when with bugles blowing the 1919 class of the town we were in marched down the street locked arm in arm, with streamers of red, white and blue pinned to them, and the words, "Bons pour la service," showing that they were good for service. There were so many who seemed so young, and yet that is the fortune of war. Your socks have been perfectly wonderful, for wool socks are the only thing a fellow can wear here. When I gave them to my French laundress I told her you made them for me, and that she must be very careful of them. She beamed all over and said, "Oui, oui, je comprends." She has a little daughter called Pollette and I take her candy. She is the cunningest little thing. Her father was on leave the last time I was there, and he is a typical soldier. The poor man had to come to attention and salute when I entered his own house, yet we don't look much

like officers, spattered with mud most of the time and in old uniforms, but we are not on any pink teas over here and we realize it. I hope I can get to the front shortly. We are always hoping. I wish I could spend the afternoon at the Colonial with you, having tea and dancing, or tea beside the hearth. I like to look back to that and the nights when I went home with you.

Always your brother,

VINTON.

P. S. We have a song which runs as follows :

“I want to go home
No longer to roam.
The bullets they whistle,
The cannons they roar.
I don’t want to go to the trenches no more,
I want to go over the sea
Where the Allemands can’t get at me.
Oh, my ! I am too young to die,
I want to go home.”

Don’t take it to heart. The fellows don’t want to go back now if they could until the thing is over, and then won’t we enjoy the comforts of home ! Until then I can only say as the Frenchmen do, “Bon courage.”

February 20.

DEAREST DARLING MOTHER :

You are taking the best care of yourself, mother dear, aren't you? For it is to you I am coming back and it is to hear your words of love that I am looking forward, and waiting for that day, and it is for that that I shall do my best work here and make myself of use. So don't you see you must keep up your end and keep perfectly well, and don't let other people's sadnesses sadden you too much. You have such a wonderful heart I know you can't help it. My French isn't improving much, for which I am very sorry. I haven't any time to study it, and little time to practice. Outside of the stores I hardly have a chance to talk to any one. The country all around here is wonderful, but we are losing our sense of the artistic. Lots of little villages are scattered around like bunches of pebbles, much more so than in England. Do you remember that beautiful ride from London to Edinburgh? What wonderful travels we have had together, and yet when we get down to it along what different lines our minds are running. That

is the psychological point of view. That is why I don't care for psychology when it makes plain realities give the lie to our dreams. Heaps of love for yourself and grandmother.

Lovingly,

VINTON.

February 22.

SISTER PEGGY DEAR:

You can't guess what I have just been doing—rereading for the sixteenth time those three letters I received from you in New York, and, Peggy, I can't thank you enough for them. I am so glad that you are near my wonderful mother, for sometimes when I think how much father meant to her and how lonely she must be without him, I should worry a lot but for you, and, Peggy, you are just so wonderful I know you will be a tremendous blessing to her. We men here get to living from one day to another. We don't try to solve the future or worry about what we are to do, but I know that way down deep is that thought of the moment when the returning soldier comes

home. Some of them, I am afraid, will be disappointed, and some, when they return, will not find conditions as they expect, but to me the greatest thing I can think of is to get back to mother, and to see you again, and in the meantime your little compass, symbolic of so much I have since come to understand, will guide me, and I shall be careful not to let any lode-stone attract the needle out of the true course. I think you will understand the symbols I am talking in, and perhaps you did when you gave me the compass. A bunch of homesick, hungry fellows gather about the mantel each day and jam each other in an endeavor to look over the mail. Some one yells, "Only the same old papers," but every one feels there might have been one in that bunch accidentally overlooked, for him, so the jam remains until the bell rings for dinner, and we pile into the mess hall, and forget the longing for a letter in comparing notes on the morning's work or perform the soldier's eternal trick in kicking about something or somebody. I am just as pleased as I can be with Tennyson. I read it week-ends, for at

night all my work is done by candle. This isn't a newsy letter but there is so little I can write about. France is France, and that is about all I can say of it.

With love from your brother,

PINK.

March 2.

DEAREST MOTHER:

To-day is Sunday and I imagine you are going down to church with grandmother. How I would like to be with you ! I suppose it will be about Easter time when you receive this, so my Easter greetings go with this. Isn't it true what a large part in our lives anticipation plays ? Here we are with no idea of what is coming next, yet we are all looking forward to it just because of its vagueness, and there isn't a man here who doesn't anticipate returning home. When I see some of the fellows here who have given up pretty fine business occupations, what I did was easy in comparison, for mine came right at a time when it meant very little sacrifice to me, nothing lost except time, which, however, is a wonderfully valuable thing, but

what is time so long as you are living and doing what you feel is in a right cause! Give my love to grandmother and the rest of the family, and give Tippy an extra dose of "kitty salmon." You know father is a tremendous inspiration to me here. I keep thinking what he would think, and it helps me a lot. I begin to see values more than ever, so I am trying by deeds to be an example, not words, for words are so easy that the fellow who talks good here is not the fellow who is particularly popular or influential. You are my wonderful mother, and those little snap-shots I have of you all show you as my cheery, smiling, darling mother. I know you will continue to smile and cheer the world up, no matter what happens, for just the picture of your smiling face has cheered more than one of my friends around here.

Ever so lovingly,

VINTON.

March 5.

DEAR SISTER PEGGY :

It is very seldom that I get at all lonesome over here and then it is because I have

not done as well as I might, but my heart is in the States. Occasionally I think how much Hal is doing, and others I know, in a constructive way, and here I am trying my best to be destructive, and invent every possible method of destroying, not only works of human hands but the human hands themselves. Well, you know enough of my nature to know what I think. I just have to pass that over, and think of the cause and necessity, the fact that we are protecting the people in the States from an attack by the Boche. Your little compass has done wonders this week, and though it has not saved lives yet it has saved reputations, and the time will come when it may be called upon to save life. Don't let mother talk too much about me. If I were one hundred thousandth part as good as she would like to make me out, I would be superhuman. There are lots of other men here in France besides myself, so it is not a lonely job, and it isn't one we suffer from, unless you get wounded, and then the possibility is that you get a slight scratch or you never know what hit you. I don't wonder a man uses his

Bible over here, and yet as I heard a woman in the States say, a religion to which men run by being frightened to death isn't the religion you want, you want the real thing. We get the real thing here as regards uncovering what men are made of. We all have our petty failures, but whether we have the stuff that stands under real strain proves in the end. May your brother have this when the time comes.

March 6.

DEAREST OF WONDERFUL MOTHERS:

Seven letters reached me to-day, and absolutely I am the happiest boy in France. I never knew what two months without mail meant until I got these. I feel as I did after you and Peggy made that wonderful visit to Fort Niagara, almost uncontrollable, and I look around and pity the rest of the fellows. They have received mail, but not such letters as you can write. Two from you, two from Peggy, two from Hal and one from Aunt Annie! I am absolutely a multi-millionaire to-night, happier than any of them, and now if I can stop long enough from my raving,

I'll begin to answer your letters. I think having a piano is a corking thing. I wish I were there to hear you play some of the things I used to love when I was little, and had no thought of the army. As for yourself, you are the bravest of the brave. I know in a little way how much you suffer in the loss of dear father. When I was at Colgate before the week at Clifton Springs and had an inkling of the possible, I remember going over the question, "What would you do without father?" It didn't seem possible, and yet things have to happen. I thoroughly believe that God has a way of working things out for the best, and though lots of us have to suffer in our own individual way, it is all for the best. Your son is just as proud of you as he can be, and all of my friends and yours tell of that wonderful smile of yours "lighting up the dark and crowded subway" as Aunt Annie puts it. Work is awfully interesting and of the type that makes you sleep pretty soundly at night.

Always lovingly,

VINTON.

March 10.

DEAR LOUISE:

I am not exactly homesick, but I do wish I were back in the States this Sunday morning. It reminds me of that Sunday when you and mother and grandmother and I went down to church together. I haven't been to church since I left the States, there being none to go to, and there also not being an over-sufficiency of time. I had a letter from mother the other day and she wrote how beautifully you played the piano. I have heard one piano since I left the ship. The other night we happened to run across a fellow playing, and a little chap, who played girls' parts in college-shows, danced with me a little. It seemed funny even to dance with a fellow. We are waiting orders now, and we have learned to do it calmly without any excitement as to what, where or when. I often read my Browning, and I do enjoy it so much. Do you remember coming back from Peter Ibbetson? You were so funny, and you certainly had your way every time, didn't you? I wish you could feed me a chocolate now. I mustn't make matters

worse for me here than they are by thinking of those wonderful days. And now with love for my dear little sister, this letter goes.

Always your brother,

VINTON.

Company G, 28th Infantry,

March 11.

DEAREST OF MOTHERS :

From the above you will see that my schooling days are over, and that I am assigned to troops and real troops at that, men who have been here in training for months. My heart goes out to you and I long to hold you in my arms, for I love you so much. We are feeling fine, and as for food, the nearer we get to the front the better it is. There is almost a continuous hum of aeroplanes over our heads, and we are coming in contact with Missouri mules here. We carry gas masks slung across our shoulders, and as for appearance you would never pick me out for an officer. My thermos flask has been of great benefit, also my bedding roll. We are beginning to get real war now. The Americans show up wonderfully,—a bunch to be

proud of. Believe me, I have been eating. I can stow away more "slum and punk and java" than I would have thought could be eaten by five men. Give my love to grandmother. I must close and try to send this off.

Heaps of love,

VINTON.

March 11.

DEAR PEGGY:

One of the fellows was pretty blue, and so he talked it all out to me to-night. You know I think it helps if you can tell some one who at least appears to be interested. If I can be a little help in this way I feel it is accomplishing something. It is pretty hard for some of these boys over here. You would laugh if you could see me wearing a silver bracelet around, and yet that is my identification tag. I have my name, rank and organization engraved upon it; so with bracelet, wrist-watch, and Beta ring, I would be a sight for sore eyes in pre-war days. One thing I can truthfully say, and that is I have no regret for any of the steps I have taken since I started in at this war

game, except that I might have studied a little harder. Sometimes I find myself growing careless, however. I say to myself, "Oh, well, you are up with the highest in the group. You are doing pretty well, old top," and then I realize that with my college education I ought to be there anyhow, and ought to be higher. Little sister, it means a lot to me to know that some one occasionally thinks about me out here, for I feel sure that you do. Of course it means more than I could ever write on paper, especially when it is some one I feel I have such a wonderful relation with as with you. I must hurry off to my trundle now as next week holds plenty of stiff work. So good-night, dear sister Peggy.

PINK.

March 28.

DEAREST AND MOST WONDERFUL
OF MOTHERS :

I love to think of you with your inspiring smile doing so much good and helping so many people. But I know you are, way down deep, waiting for the day when I will come home, and that is what I care most

about. But in the meantime there are such tremendous things to be done that our little personalities sink into nothingness. Things are so great here there is no place for small things, and yet the small things each have to be accomplished, for that is the way great things result. The weather is bright and sunshiny in the daytime, and at night my sleeping bag is the biggest comfort ever. Just heaps and heaps of love go in this letter, and remember we are all cheerful over here and we send home just as much as we can. This letter is brimful of it. Especially next Sunday, Easter Sunday, I shall be thinking of you and eating imaginary hot-cross buns with you.

With heaps and heaps of love,

VINTON.

April 4.

DEAREST SISTER PEGGY:

I am just now at the turning point where I will either make good or fail, and I am relying on you and the others to back me up mentally. Letters may not be regular now, but don't let mother worry. I know

you are doing everything in your power to cheer her up, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart and love you the more for it. I am hoping to give her reason for being prouder than ever for one of those stars in the window. Oh, Peggy, what would I give to sit on that divan in front of the fire, and see you sit there with your feet tucked up under you and talk with you ! Now I begin to appreciate all the things that were said to me at home, for in this war it is each one for himself if you are an officer, and unless you think of telling another man he is getting on finely, there are no compliments exchanged.

Lovingly,

PINK.

April 7.

DARLING LITTLE MOTHER :

You promised me not to worry and I know you won't, you brave, wonderful mother, but I am wondering whether you tried to read between the lines of my recent letters for something that wasn't there which would give you cause for worry. I keep wondering what father would think of it

all. I know he wouldn't want me anywhere else than just where I am. When the time comes when I see you again I think I will burst from happiness. I follow after Telemachus rather than Ulysses, I guess. You have been in my thoughts a great deal to-day and I have been thinking of you as being my proud little mother, proud that you have a son who is trying to do his bit, and yet I know you have times when it seems pretty hard. I haven't read it in your letters but intuition tells me, so I want you to know things are going finely. I wouldn't change places with any one in the States now, not until the war is over or I have accomplished something worth while. It is just three months ago to-day that I sailed from New York and eleven months since I first put on uniform. I feel almost as if I had been in it all my life long. Last night one of the older "shave-tails" read aloud to me part of his letter from home, and it was the kind of a letter that you might write, so I just imagined it was from you. That mother was proud of her son, too, but that is not what we are here for, and my thoughts are

that I may be able to deliver the goods when the day comes.

April 19.

Things are going finely now, and at present we are billeted in an old French château occupied at one time by some Count. In fact the aged Countess is living here still. Beautiful grounds surround the place; there are great rooms where you can imagine impressive ceremonies were carried out; inlaid floors,—especially in the ballroom where many stately dances were held; pictures still hanging from the walls, and gorgeous paintings looking down upon you with surprise,—surprise at seeing Americans encroaching upon the halls and rooms which they once occupied in true French fashion. One can imagine wild revelries held in this place, for that seems typical of the France I have seen as a soldier.

May 3.

Four months ago to-day I said good-bye to the people I loved best in the world and a great four months it has been, too. Just two days ago I received a batch of de-

layed mail and among others were six letters from you, from February 15 to March 25. Oh, Peggy, you don't know how much letters mean over here, how much courage is brought in them, not physical courage but mental. Here, unless you receive letters as I have been receiving them, it is so easy for your mind to ooze out on a lower level, but the very fact that you at home expect such high things make me strive harder. If a man has a conscience that tells him to do a thing and he loiters, it is a great deal worse than being killed. When they told me that I had some mail, I was so eager for it that I forgot my gas-mask which we carry with us all the time.

I think the United States army might well be called the sanitary corps, for they always clean up every place they stop in, and these French towns are pretty filthy. You wouldn't notice it in touring France in a car, but when you billet men in stables you find the value of such sanitary work. Peggy, there isn't any one anywhere as fortunate as I am in having at home such wonderful people who, I know, are back of me. Don't

think I ever regret being here for I am proud to be in the van of the American Forces in France, and I think there is the highest morale in our battalion of any in France. The uniforms one sees here are not the neat and tailor-made uniforms one sees on Washington Street or Fifth Avenue.

The plan for to-morrow—Mothers' Day—is a great thing. I think the whole company will take advantage of it and that will keep us pretty busy in our spare moments censoring the letters. Wouldn't I like to run in to Mather Court, and surprise you all, but I fancy we will stay here until quite a while after the end of the war. Do you know I think it will be hard for me to settle down to an indoor job after I get through this, but that is too far in the distance to worry about as yet. The way they have to run the platoon now makes the Platoon Commander much more responsible for the appearance of the platoon than before, for the Company Commander has so much more to look after, he cannot be in intimate touch as formerly. So the main thing is to keep the men happy, keep them working in team

work, look after their food and clothing, see that they bathe, and just now I am seeing that they all write home. In fact just this minute I received five Mothers' Day letters to be censored. The hardest thing of all is to punish the men. Think of me, just out of college . . . well, it is unthinkable even to me. So I won't try to inflict it on you, for the picture would make you laugh.

Always your brother,

PINK.

May 8.

DEAR BETTY:

Four of your letters have come in within a week, and I surely was glad to hear from you. You ask me how I react to these experiences. Why, I don't seem to react; they just come in the natural course of events, and I swing along feeling that I am doing exactly what I should. Sometimes when I am marching along at the head of a body of men,—laden down with steel Stetson, gas-masks, pack, field-glasses, pistol and overcoat, balancing myself with a cane,—sometimes in the cold starlight it all seems

to slip off, and like Hermes of old I go on winged feet, feeling all the glories of the ages back of me bearing me up. For the most part, however, the path of duty necessitates a strict observance of its contours, for you are likely to step in a shell-hole if you go star-gazing too much.

A lot of things have happened this last year which change the history of the whole world, and narrowed down to us small mortals, change our lives considerably too. It is going to be hard for the men who have been in France and who will return, to settle down to an ordinary kind of life. We over here are not the heroes in spite of the hardships we occasionally endure,—though we get the credit,—the real heroes are those like my mother, who stay at home and continue with their normal lives, but with the thought of the unknown ever present. Things are—well, I guess I have rambled long enough.

VINTON.

May 12.

MOTHER DEAR :

Some nights when I look up at the

stars, my mind goes back with startling vividness to those days at Cambridge. Wasn't that a wonderful month and what a wonderful time we had together! At such times too I seem to get a new vision, for it isn't often we can throw off our immediate surroundings. I am getting to believe one changes by mere associations. I used to believe that man's character was predestined and unalterable. I now see how surroundings can mould a man, and I thank God, not as the Jew that I am better than other men, but that I was born of such wonderful parents, and kept and brought up in such a wonderful way, and have the love of such a noble mother to sustain me. And now the responsibility remains with me of what my life shall consist. I am happy again in that I have been given a platoon. It is so much more satisfactory than acting second in command. Mother dear, you are a tremendous help here in France. The small good I can do is all you over here. Don't laugh too much when I tell you I haven't slept with my clothes off for two months. Most nights though I have been

able to take off my shoes. Mother, your letters are perfectly great. They are all so cheery, and I know there are times when you don't feel that way. The soldier develops a great spirit over here. He says there is a shell over in Germany with his name on it, and when that comes there is no use dodging it, for it will find him out in the deepest dugout, but until it comes, what is the use of worrying about the rest of them. I read to-day about one of my closest friends, Lloyd Ludwig, who was killed by a fall from an aeroplane in Oxford, England. This is Mothers' Day, so you are more in my thoughts than ever, if that is possible. My love to grandmother, with just oceans of love for yourself.

VINTON.

May 15.

WONDERFUL LITTLE SISTER OF
MINE, LOUISE:

After reading over your letter for the 'steenth time, I must write you again. You write such wonderful letters to me. I simply can't thank you enough for them. If I were

one thousandth part as good as the things you say about me, I would be magnificent, and you are spoiling me, but I love to be spoiled by you. The weather here is fine. I like weather in all shapes and conditions. Even pitch black nights in the rain have their fascination, for then the flash of guns gives a bizarre effect which you would pay three dollars to see in an opera. As far as health goes, I never felt better or in better spirits in my life, but what wouldn't I give to go to a dance! I will be either so keen for it when I get back that I will never get enough, or I will be hardened to the lack of it. I must stop a minute to censor about twenty letters. My present command is by far the most interesting work of the whole year, because this is what I have been training myself for all along.

Your brother,

VINTON.

May 21.

MOTHER DEAR:

I have not been in a position yet where I could write more than the meagrest

details. It is almost a month since I have seen a civilian save those who came here one day. This life does give you a love of nature, a love of that which is just beyond the human grasp. You go out into the moonlight and feel the place "holy and enchanted," a new world, half mystical, a different moon, more wondrous lights;—then some tremendous 155 goes off and shatters your dream. The sun pours down its light and heat, and you lie under a tree with half-closed eyes, and your thoughts are far away, miles and miles,—when suddenly plunk, plunk, around you, and you decide the safest thing is to put on your gas-mask. Life is great and the aims of the war are great. It is when you see into the aims with your inner eyes that you see the bigness of it all. Just like religion, those moments are few and far between, yet it is like the Mount of Transfiguration when you go up and receive your inspiration anew. I wish I were more worthy of what you think me to be. You give me credit for being so many thousand times better than I am. I wish I were deserving of it. Give my best love to

grandmother, and heaps and heaps for yourself.

Lovingly,

VINTON.

May 22.

I have moved back to a place where we can go around in safety in the daytime and I hardly know what to do with such liberty, let alone seeing chickens and cows and civilians, which I haven't feasted my eyes on for a month now. Yes, this morning, until it became too hot, I literally paced the streets in eager anticipation of seeing the inhabitants. I have thus far seen nine in all: eight old women just managing to keep from dropping to pieces by staying dressed all the time,—at least that is the impression I received,—and one old man with a scythe. Oh, it is so good to be alive and know that you are in it! You laugh at my box-car with its "40 hommes, 8 cheveaux," but they are great places to live in. We managed to keep the number in our car within thirty. With straw in the bottom, we had comfortable quarters, and at night with our feet

pointed towards the centre we slept well. The noise of the rattling door sent us to sleep. In one corner we had our boxes of hard bread and "corn-willie," and one pail did us for drinking, shaving, washing, etc. But, mother dear, in spite of all these new and awfully interesting experiences, I always go back to that month with you in Boston as the happiest of all times. That shows how shallow-minded I am when I could forget everything and just live in the present. Yes, I am in a joyful mood. It is so quiet here, it seems strangely unnatural. Mother dear, I am absolutely content with my work, so don't worry about my finding hardships. We have them, but I would rather have them and share them, than see other men have them alone. You get a broader viewpoint. I must send this off with heaps and heaps of love.

May 25.

PEGGY DEAR:

I can never tell you how much this friendship of ours has meant, particularly over here. You have been a beautiful sister

to me, and just to know that you were thinking of me has helped me to do better than otherwise I could have done, and, Peggy, don't think of me having hardships more than I can endure. The soldier just lives his life as any other person, with a touch of unreality ; but in other lives there is that unnaturalness too, as when a bunch of men are herded together for four years in college. Just now where I am it seems strangely quiet, not a sound of exploding shells or the roar of artillery, and for the first time in months I see cows and chickens and human beings in civilian clothes. I sometimes wonder what heaven can possibly be like, for our conceptions of it keep changing so constantly, and no two people will be satisfied with the same kind of heaven, and there will always be some one jealous of some one else's heaven if we each have our own. But we don't have much time to think of heaven now. I have been in many cities or rather towns, where the moonlight falls through roofless walls and gardens, and streets are ripped up with shells, and I am here in France to save our own homes and parks

from being ruined as they are ruined over here.

Always affectionately,

PINK.

May 31.

DEAREST OF DARLING MOTHERS :

It is a tired boy that writes to you tonight after some of the most strenuous hours of my life. I expect soon to be in a place where I can write details of my work and let you know more what I am doing. You have been in my thoughts a very great deal, and I love to picture your cheerful, smiling face as over me, and watching me, and smiling the encouragement I feel you are sending across to me. I received a couple of your letters to-day, and they do cheer me so much. Also two from Hal telling of his work and play. Letters are such a tremendous help here. They mean a great deal. There are getting to be beaucoup Americans over here. We had a bunch of new men assigned to our Company, and I organized them into a platoon, and "carried on" with them almost like an independent company. I feel some

of the men have a real affection for their leader. Not with pride do I say it, but it was mutual. They were a fine bunch and did fine work. I love you, love you, and my love has grown immensely since I have been here. Boyhood days are of the past and I feel years older. Won't we have a glorious time together when I get back? I have seen some of the sights Coningsby Dawson writes about, and when they are your own friends it brings you to a realization of what war is. Excuse this sad strain in my letter, mother dear, and believe me always

Your loving son,

VINTON.

This letter was written just after the "over-the-top" drive at Cantigny, for which Vinton received a citation by Major-General Bullard and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross by General Pershing.

June 1.

LOUISE DEAR:

The chewing gum you sent me is a great thing, and has saved me a whole lot of worry. I shall tell you some time one of the

places where I chewed it. Also when you have a canteen with only a few drops of water left, and a whole day to go, your throat gets dry and sticky, and the gum keeps things running, and when you are listening to "crumps" falling all around, and each one seems to have just missed the trench you are in, and your heart is in your ears listening to the whistle of the next one, then chewing gum helps. I am getting to look old and haggard. That is the trouble with us chaps over here. When we get back we won't be good for anything, while the fortunate men at home will have . . . Does this sound funny? It is only a passing thought in my head, so forgive it. We are all glad we are here, and will stick until the last gun is fired if that is the command.

Love to my little sister,

VINTON.

June 3.

DEAREST AND MOST WONDERFUL
OF MOTHERS:

Do you realize that five whole months ago to-day I left you in the South Station at

Boston, and what a long, long time ago it was, and, mother, if only I could tell you how my love for you has grown in that time ! All I do is with you in mind, you, with your cheerful, wonderful smile, and how that heartens me over here, that for me you are smiling many, many times when in reality the smile is not there. I hope one of these days to have some good news to tell you. Nothing much, but everything cheerful helps the smile and the war too. Oh, mother, what a lot has happened the last five months ! Isn't it a revelation how America has awakened ! She surely is doing wonderful work here. And now I am looking forward to the time when I shall see you. Won't we have a wonderful time when we do ? Please use any of my money you need. It is all yours. Everything of mine is yours, mother dear, for you have made me and helped me get where I am. Anything I can do worth while is from you. You asked me in your last letter if I have seen any Boches. Yes I have, both as hated enemies in the opposing line, and then as men in fear crying, "Kamerad," with hands extended, and then in that bond

which cannot help but bind us all when one is wounded so badly that the human being is to the fore, yet I hate them not as human beings, for in spite of war I cannot hate human beings,—I hate the mechanism, the fiendish deviltry of it all that makes for this. I had a wonderful body of men who proved they would “go through hell for me.” I have another platoon now, and so it goes. You get one body of men, then you switch to another, but, mother dear, think of me as always cheerful over here. I will keep up my end, knowing that you are doing the same there. It is so wonderful to know that I have such a beautiful ideal mother back there. Love, love, love goes across the sea to you, constant love that is larger and purer and deeper than ever before, and remember your son is battling for you and all those who have meant so much to him. Just heaps and heaps of love to you and give my best love to grandmother.

VINTON.

June 3.

PEGGY DEAREST :

I warn you this letter will start out

badly, so here goes. Yes, I am blue and homesick and everything, and all that makes me wish I were back in the States. There are many things that make me feel that way, but I must just overcome them, and so saying, "he overcame them." Well, Peggy dear, I do feel better and it is because of that eternal backing I know I am receiving from mother and you, and God knows I need it. If you stay here long, more and more you stand alone as the stake against which other weary and tired ones can rest. At first I did all the resting, and I now begin to appreciate those that I rested against. Oh, Peggy, what wonderful days college days are, and as our Beta song goes,

" Life is at best a struggle,
It always comes too soon."

But I must not forget the rest of the song, so I keep singing it to myself. Yes, Peggy, I am taking lessons from that wonderful little mother of mine, and smiling when there are no smiles here. Don't think I am discouraged, a bit cast down, perhaps, but cheerio, I am at it again. I think it is be-

cause I have lost one of my best friends that I have been feeling so badly, but duty calls and it is great to obey duty, "the stern daughter of the voice of God." My battalion officer has commended me, and there is much that some day I will tell you. You know here one changes his mind on the important things of life. I am at sea, Peggy. I scarcely know where I stand. When you see how little life is and how quickly one can lose it you begin to think of the greater things. The most a man can do is to do his duty to the utmost. You have been an awfully good little listener, and the next letter will be more cheerful, I promise, and, Peggy, you have given me courage to keep driving.

Ever so lovingly,

VINTON.

June 5.

DEAREST OF MOTHERS:

I don't seem to be able to keep from writing you. I want to write to you all the time. What wouldn't I give to sit down, hug you close and talk to you! I have been thinking of father a great deal recently. It

was two years ago we were all together in Hamilton. What lovely days those were! We were all so proud of you, and father was all in his glory at having one of his sons graduating from college. May I be worthy of his memory! There are moments when it is easy to do things that are detrimental if you are not careful, but thoughts of you and father have kept me true. Then too it is hard sometimes to endure the long dragging hours when you simply sit still, but, mother dear, I have proved myself in the hard places, and with a prayer on my lips I have come through none the less a man for it. How much your dear face has meant to me the last few days! I have thought of you constantly, and always your face has been there to cheer me. Oh, I am looking forward to that wonderful time we will have together. I think I will allow myself one month's rest for every six months I am here. I am hoping it won't be long now, but when it comes, it will be heaven. It is only a dream, but dreams come true. If you think my letters are not cheerful I want to correct that impression, for I want you to

know your smile is reflected over here as the moon reflects the light of the sun. You can see how easy it is for a bunch of men to copy their leader. An indifferent leader has a following of indifferent men in his platoon. That is the way it goes. I surely have fine men in my platoon, and things are beginning to take on a new aspect. You see I have only had the men for a couple of days now and I think it will be a permanent assignment this time. A year ago you were writing me those lovely camp letters. Now your letters go much farther, and also deeper. I think I have matured in several ways since father saw me a year and a half ago, and a little since you saw me, too. As they say, if you don't go forward you go backward, so I am doing my best to go forward. You know one of these days I am going to take a lot of pleasure in putting on that good uniform of mine. It has been almost three months since I saw it. I keep my clothes clean, but they are plain soldier's clothes, but for the bars. But it isn't the uniform that makes the leader, it is what you have in you, and with God's help and my own teeth I will

succeed. You know I find my own teeth clinched unconsciously at times. I am afraid I am getting to be an awful coffee drinker, almost a quart at a meal of the strongest. It is my one indulgence, no more than any one has, but because I want it, it looks to me like an indulgence. Think of me as doing my duty over here, and getting to be a man in doing it. How proud I shall be to walk down the street with you, and what wonderful times we shall have. What would I give for a word from that wonderful father of mine, and yet we must go on and do our best, without any words from those gone before. Two of my best leaders over here have gone, and one just has to redouble his efforts to try in a little way to fill the gap. And now again, precious mother of mine, good-bye.

VINTON.

PRECIOUS BIT OF SUNSHINE:

Yes, mother dear, you are that to me, and to every one who knows you. As I gradually acquire responsibility and leader-

June 7.

ship and cease to be a blind follower, I find my path paved with all kinds of boulders around which it is necessary to drive, but believe me, mother dear, I will do my best, and should anything happen to me remember I am glad to give all to repay my debt to my country. You can't possibly imagine how much you have meant to me the last few days, for I have used you as a landmark on which to assemble my thoughts. That is rather an odd metaphor, but the state of one's mind is rather chaotic at times, and needs an assembling point. I wish I were in Cambridge so that I could go with you to father's grave. I hope you don't go alone. And one of these days when I do get back, you are there, and next to doing my share in winning the war is getting back to you. Just now I am writing under difficulties, but my heart is just as bright, and I love you more than ever. I am in a little dugout eighteen inches high and about two feet wide, with a little candle at my head. That is where I sleep daytimes. But you know if one only sees the broader vision, and the fight for democracy, small inconveniences

vanish away. When I get back let us read quite a little aloud. There is so much I want to read now. I used to feel the truth of that statement that if you keep working up your sentiments and emotions and then don't accomplish anything, it is worse than useless, but I feel now that when I get through I shall be entitled to indulge myself more. I love to talk about you to my fellow officers, mother dear. You are a help to them too, and I keep my men working together and cheerful through you. And now I must close with heaps and oceans of love to the most wonderful person on earth.

Lovingly,

VINTON.

June 10.

DEAREST OF MOTHERS:

This war has taught me the meaning of the "courage of the commonplace." It is not going over the top that takes courage. It is staying in one place with no movement possible for fifteen hours at a stretch that takes courage. I mean mental courage, for my mind is such that it has got to be doing

something. I have lived over nearly every experience I have ever had. Please don't think I am complaining, for I am not. I am trying to do my best and keep in the best condition, for Uncle Sam needs us all in our prime strength. Can you send in your letters little booklets, things I can slip in my pockets and carry, not too heavy? You see my books of poems are in my trunk. I expect one of these days I may see it again. I may be sent back to officers' school or something of that sort. Your letter of May 11th I have read and reread a countless number of times. You write such comforting, cheery letters. A year ago now I was going through what I thought were fearful and wonderful experiences, but then "Forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit." That is a very comforting motto. I guess I can tell you now what I did last March when I finished officers' school. I went up to the Company by train, truck and mule-cart, and was immediately put under a platoon leader, and the next day I went up to reconnoitre the front lines where the Company was to go in a very short time. You can imagine my feel-

ings at getting into the thick of it so soon. Then came the period in the front lines when I slept but little, as we weren't supposed to sleep, and lived in mud up to my knees. I lost my rubber boots just before I started, so that is where three pairs of socks kept my feet in shape. We were fortunate in not coming in for much bombardment. I learned a good deal up there. It was just back of the lines that I sent my Easter telegram, and I sent it the evening of the night that we hiked all night, and all the next day, Easter Day. Then came a short rest at a cantonment. From there on I wrote you about the ride in the car for the "40 hommes, 8 cheveaux." All this time I was in charge of a platoon, my chief having been taken sick. In fact he went deaf temporarily in the trenches, and it was funny, though dangerous, for he couldn't hear a man challenge him.

June 12.

It is rather hard to keep track of the days, they just blend together so. It is the first time I ever thought there could be too much daylight. You see it is light from

4 A. M. until 10 P. M. I am living in a luxurious place now, three and a half feet high, and I have an entire three feet to roll over in, so I can sit up and write to the most wonderful little mother in the world. I have been with the Company just three months today, a whole training-camp period. Some of the things I originally thought were touches of war when I arrived in France would seem luxury now. It is luxury indeed to sleep with one's shoes off. I carry a blanket with me and that is indispensable, also canned alcohol. I wish you could see me try to shave lying down. Anyway we are beating the Hun and at his own game. That is typical of the Americans. The bigger the surprise he springs, the harder the American comes back and in the same line. And of course my admiration for the French and British is unbounded. And next to the war is you, and getting home again to you, mother dear. What a glorious day it will be! I love to think of myself as in the star in your window. I get a feeling of security just to think of it. I am beginning to appreciate more than ever the glories of nature, the early morning

mists, and the clear, sunlit fields and trees.
Isn't the world a wonderful place to live in ?

Your loving son,

VINTON.

June 14.

PEGGY DEAR :

You can't imagine how welcome your letters were, May 14th and 20th, when they reached me, and they simply uplifted me as I read them sitting in the trench with Aurora just hitching up her fiery team to start off another day. I wasn't going to do any writing save to mother, but I had to squeeze in this letter to you. Sometimes time seems to fly by, and at others it goes by at such speed that a snail would look like a flash of lightning. But that is neither here nor there. The fact is I have been five months away from the States, and believe me it seems like a long period of time. How quickly we can descend from our own high civilization to the instincts of the animal, and the hunted animal at that. Some of the things I do now and get along without, I would have thought absolutely impossible a year ago, yes, less

than a year ago. For at that first training-camp the feeding seemed wild, but that was luxury to what we have sometimes now, but it all counts in this big experience, and it isn't the outward hardships that bother you at all. It all reflects back to your inner soul. If you are selfish and think about yourself, so much the worse for you. You have to suffer, and your nerves in turn are acted upon. I found myself that way, and I started telling a story, that of "Les Miserables," as nearly as I could remember it, and it helped my mind wonderfully. Yesterday I managed to get sent for the afternoon to another Company where they weren't under the restrictions of our present surroundings, and I had the luxury of a glorious meal eaten off plates and at a table, and talk about good things to eat! I just stuffed myself. I am awfully glad I have a platoon now, and the men, I feel sure, have confidence in me and will follow where I lead. That is the big thing, that when I get orders to go anywhere I can feel assured the men are back of me. You would laugh to hear some of the fatherly advice I hand out to men four and six years

my senior. Well, c'est la guerre. Here's hoping the day won't be so very far off when I shall see you again.

Always affectionately,

BROTHER PINK.

June 15.

MOTHER DEAREST :

Your two wonderful letters of May 14th and 18th reached me yesterday, and in the glory of an early sunrise in France, with the chill of the night air still unconquered by the sun's rays, I read them seated in the entrance to my little home, which, under the reflection of your letters, transformed itself into a palace. You are so wonderful, mother, and write such letters! Your Mothers' Day letter did so much to cheer me and help me, and I hope you received mine. There are so many brave lads over here who stick and fight, no matter what the odds, not so much physical as mental, for that is where the unseen opponents can work so much harm. I haven't asked for packages, as so few actually get here. Of the eighteen I know that were sent me, I have received four, so

you can see it is better for me to get along without. The date on this letter is five months from the day my boat dropped down the river, five long months, yet crowded full of experiences I shall never regret. You may have noticed the death of Major Rasmussen, killed in action. He was the finest type of a leader, a pure war-soldier through and through. Twenty years of war-soldiering with every nation you can imagine gave him the principles and bearing of a true soldier of fortune, and we who were under him were ready to follow wherever he led. He died like a true fighter, and almost his last words were, "It has been a great fight, boys. Give them hell for me," and we have been doing it too. I heard one man say, "And there's one for Major Rasmussen." Oh, it is wonderful to be living in this age, and when peace comes and the nations gather around the Board, won't it be interesting to see how they decide and feel you had a little part in that decision yourself! But, mother, my mind always returns to that day when the returning soldier comes home, and I shall see you again and

hold you tight. It is now three months is the same uniform, and day and night, too. I have become literally attached to these clothes. My one pair of spiral leggings are worn threadbare, but as long as a man does his bit, clothes don't count. Love to grandmother, heaps and heaps for you.

VINTON.

June 17.

About a year ago I was looking forward to the time when I would see you again. Then I knew when it would be. Now I don't know, but I am looking forward just the same. I have the same platoon, and I am trying my best to be a worthy leader, but it is hard and one needs more than human strength to do it. Oh, your letter helped me so much saying that no matter how hard or lonely my work you were there with me. I know it, mother dear, and it helps tremendously. I have my hands full checking and looking after the workings of the platoon, and there are lots of things necessary here which under normal conditions are not required, and yet I feel I am

filling my post not right. There is a yearning to do better that I don't seem to attain to. I can't pick out just what my fault is, and that is a trouble. Well, mother dear, give my love to every one, and I will continue to be your true son over here, true to the high ideals you expect of me. Wouldn't I love to take some trips with you, to Cooperstown or New York! Haven't we had some great times together!

Lovingly,

VINTON.

June 19.

MOTHER DEAR:

I have been thinking a lot of you and father this afternoon. Afternoon, I can hear you say, what is he doing that he is thinking in the afternoon instead of working. Well, for a couple of days my work has consisted of night work, and we sleep daytimes, and here in France the day is too long for that kind of thing. To get back to the point, more and more I realize what wonderful parents you have been, and now you. Oh, that I could do something to show how I

appreciate it, but I can never begin to do what it deserves. About the platoon, I feel like glowing with pride, for they are a bunch of men who had a reputation in the Company for not caring, and now they go at all the different jobs with a will. They have "snapped out of it," as the expression goes. Of course no two men are the same, and you just have to learn by experience how to get along with the different men. But I have two or three who would do absolutely anything for me, and really a king has no better feeling than to know he has men like this. They would all follow me anywhere, and one said to me, "If the lieutenant goes on patrol I go too." That doesn't sound much on paper, but it meant a lot to me. My two sergeants, too, are absolutely reliable, and all I do is to tell them what I want done and it is done. Love to grandmother, Aunt Elizabeth, also Peggy and Louise, if they are still in Cambridge, and heaps of love for yourself.

May (crossed out), June 21.

DEAR BETTY:

You see I even forget what month I

am living in, and as for days, I found out Tuesday that I had lived through a Sunday, and tried in vain to recall what I had been thinking about. It was one of those days that your double letter reached me, and most welcome it was, I assure you. Letters are read and reread. I build up fanciful air castles round them,—that is when I am in a place where all I can do in the daytime is to lie on my back, right and left side, and stomach, especially when the days are nineteen hours long, and the rest bright moonshine. Speaking of Cape Porpoise, you don't know what ethereal lights the name itself suggests,—a flashing combination of light: sunlight, the blue glistening bay, green hills, and that whale-rib arch in its whiteness. Then there comes back to me a combination of sound and smell and taste . . . taste brings back the thought of the clam-bake. I have just finished a piece of corned "Bill" together with a hunk of French bread, and a cup of water. Besides that I had a piece of meat and some potatoes with the jackets on. So you see we are living in the lap of luxury.

I wonder what you are doing now and

what your plans are for next year. I should like to be making plans, but the only ones we make now are how we can best carry out the commands of those higher up. One thing we have been blest with,—that is beautiful and sunshiny weather, lasting for many days continuously. For nearly two months now we have had sun, and the roads are terribly dusty. It reminds me of Madison Barracks last summer,—only that there when we got dusty and dirty, we had a shower to come back to; here every cupful of water is cherished like gold. I have often chewed gum to keep myself from having to drink water. And as for — Well, I once laughed at them, but never again!

This is just one of the light sides of France that I have depicted. I could draw for you pictures I have seen that would make you shudder, but there is so much of that sort of thing that we learn to keep to ourselves. I like to think of the happy times we have had together,—and I simply have got to finish that dance we began last year, the last night. . . .

VINTON.

Later:

You say you admire the great writers and teachers as opposed to soldiers and statesmen. For the sake of argument, doesn't it strike you that all the philosophies that the great writers and teachers have generated have been reduced to nothingness by the present war? International finance couldn't stop the war, nor international religions, nor anything that was expected to call a halt to it. But men relied, at least subconsciously, on education. And yet now, see how the writers have just swung into the fray. It is seldom you see a book that doesn't mention the war. The writings of Spinoza, Liebnecht, and others, have just proved worthless, in spite of the years of their lives devoted to writing. I admit that there is going to be a big opening for education at the close of this war. Yet what is education worth if it produces war of this kind? We are supposed to be at the height of civilization, and yet I would rather fight like the ancients with cross-bars and stone axes, than face the results of our modern education,—the high explosives which throw steel splin-

ters for half a mile, and even though they don't touch you, can drive the life right out of a man,—the way one of my best friends was killed here a short time ago.

I guess that writers do swing the world, though, if Nietzsche was an example. Well, some day we'll have a chance to argue it out together.

VINTON.

June 23.

MOTHER DEAR :

I guess to-day is Sunday, I am not sure, nor am I sure it is the 23rd ; it is a mere guess. Since I last wrote you I have changed locations again. I stayed behind the rest a day to show the surrounding country, and the Captain of the other Company had eggs and pie, and so I lived like a king. Also I had an opportunity to shave for the first time in five days, and that always makes you feel a lot better. I may be sent back to the States one of these months as instructor, but not for some time yet. I don't know why it is I feel so good, I mean in such fine spirits, unless it is because I had a chance to wash my face and hands to-day. Do you

know even that has got to be a luxury. I am greatly encouraged by the war news, though I don't know what it will be, but the Americans can put it over the Boches every time. Your letters are such a comfort to me, mother dear. I always carry a couple around with me and wear them out, too. You don't know how cheap money gets over here. I spent fifty francs to-day buying chocolates for my platoon and didn't think anything of it, while in the States a quarter spent on candy would have seemed, at college, extravagant to me. You can truly think of me as being cheerful all the time. Why otherwise? I have thirty-eight men that if I duck when a shell comes, all thirty-eight duck, and if I smile, the smile goes down the line. I will soon have a substantial mirror in my platoon, and then I can judge for myself whether I am worth anything or not. I do try, though, and so I get the credit for it in spite of mistakes, but I need all your prayers, for this is no easy job, and I appreciate the sensation of making your mind conquer your feet.

Always your loving son,

VINTON.

JUNE 25.

DEAREST MOTHER:

I am at a place now where for the first time in a month I can take off my clothes and change my underclothes, and now I can crawl into my sleeping bag again too, and that is a luxury, for I have been living in a blanket, and I don't have to sleep underground. Oh, there are so many things to be thankful for, I don't know where to start, and yet it is all in the game. I am at a town I visited a couple of months ago and the people I billeted with recognized me immediately. Talk about French! I am so rusty I scarcely could ask for eggs! I don't believe the Germans like to fight against the Americans very well. At least they have to be urged pretty hard to get in the fight. Well, mother dear, remember I am thinking of you constantly and am depending upon that smile to pull me through.

Ever lovingly,

VINTON.

June 27.

DEAREST MOTHER:

I have received two more of your let-

ters, giving me May 22nd, 25th, 28th, 31st, June 5th and 8th, so you can see what a fortunate chap I am, and believe me they were just feasts and feasts, and to hear you say all those nice things! Oh, won't it be great when we finally see each other! Again I am where bands play and people laugh and dogs bark, so don't worry about me. Oh, it is so fine to be living in this age and to be doing what I am doing. I have had three months of the joy of living, hard at times to be sure, but such living as would not ordinarily be crowded into as many years. Mother dear, I am afraid I have been writing too much in my letters. I have been making it look as if I were having hardships. At the moment they are hard, but this is not all a rocky road, and we have times when we can fall out on the upward trail and lie under some shade tree and look over the broad valley of happiness back of us, rich with its memories, dotted here and there with groups of memorable occasions, and the crossroads where we made decisions. Then we see joyous fountains where happy moments have been spent, and an occasional fountain of

tears. Old châteaux loom up hid in dark green mysterious forests where we once roved in fancy, and then there are sunken roads where we got in a rut and could not see anything. So much for looking back, but at this resting-point on the hard upward journey one can look forward and see the glorious rising sun, the sun of a splendid democracy breaking in the east, and in the clear morning light the snow on the far distant mountains glistens with the splendors of the rainbow. It is the good man that reaches that goal, but the *hero* is he who having learned the way comes back and leads up others. Sometimes when I think about getting back to the States and seeing you again, it seems as if I could hardly control myself. I hope that day isn't far off, and yet don't think I am slacking any in my desire to do my work here, for I realize I have hardly begun to be useful after my long period of preparation, and I want to be just as useful as possible. I love you heaps and heaps.

Always,

VINTON

P. S. Your last letter told me about your

plans for the summer, and I think they are perfectly lovely. I hope you have the most wonderful time possible, for no one deserves it more than you, and just think of me as being happy in being able to do my little bit over here, and keep praying that I do it well. There are delicate lines hard to draw. Give my love to grandmother and Aunt Annie.

July 1.

PEGGY DEAR :

Six months is a long time when one considers being away from all ties and all old friends, but such is the power of the pen and mind over matter, that I have been extraordinarily fortunate in keeping happy. These sunny days are wonderful, and believe me I am drinking them in to the utmost while I can. Thank you for that lovely little pansy that you enclosed in your letter. I could just picture its original emplacement in your garden, and then the joy it had in being picked and admired by you. Since I have been here I have received seven of the most wonderful letters from mother. They have all been corking and cheering. She is

a wonder. I do not think my cable got through. However I am starting it again, and hope for better results this time. The days are beginning to get shorter again. I hope, no, I *wish* that I might be back before the shortest day. It is lots of fun just wishing for things. One always wishes for things one hasn't got, and one might just as well make his wishes high. I hear the people in the Bronx are thinking it is pretty hard because they don't want to save on coal and have three hot waterless days a week. Over here it is a luxury to have water to wash with, let alone hot water. But I have been living high lately, roast goose at one meal and real doughnuts and flap-jacks. Sometimes I recall that last evening when you came over, and we had such a wonderful time together. You remember the little compass you gave me. It has been my constant companion ever since. And I have had occasion to use it many times, for directions are very easily lost, and not only for physical directions has it served its purpose, but in conjunction with your note I have often pondered over it and got my bearings

in other ways. You have been such a wonderful help to me, dear little sister, and your letters have been so fine. I hope the benefit has been passed on to the men under me who need it.

With love,

YOUR BROTHER PINK.

July 3.

MOTHER DEAR :

To-day is an anniversary again. Six months since I left you there in the South Station and what a lot we have been experiencing since then! Oh, the joy of living and seeing things happen, watching the wheels of Fortune, how they spin and alter circumstances, and to feel that I am a tiny part of it, no matter how tiny. I have a piece of news I have been wanting to tell you. I received the official copy of my Divisional Citation to-day, for my work in the over-the-top drive May 27th. That means that my name has been before the Major-General of this Division, and the Citation is signed by him for "conspicuous gallantry, etc." It means now that I have a reputation to live up to, so I must work

harder than before to uphold the Citation. Mother dear, your letters have been a wonderful inspiration to me. If I could tell you a small part of what they have meant to me, it would use up a great part of the Y. M. C. A. stationery in France. May I be worthy of a small fraction of the things you write ! To-morrow is the Fourth, and I imagine there will be great doings in the States. I wish I were there so I could be with you for even twenty-four hours. What a time we would have ! I hope you will have a wonderful summer, and don't do too much worrying. I know it is hard for you to keep from it, and I know what a wonderfully brave little mother you are, and I know you will receive your reward. Your face is constantly before me and inspires me to do my best when the ordinary way is so much simpler. Love to grandmother.

Lovingly,

VINTON.

July 4.

LOUISE DEAR :

To-day is another of those glorious Fourths, but this has its special significance

in the closer alliance of all nations fighting for democracy. Where we are the few French and American flags wave as one, and the Y. M. C. A. is giving a small fête to the boys under the guiding protection of friendly airplanes. Dear little sister, I hope you will keep on sending those lovely letters of yours, for I enjoy them so much. Tell me about yourself and what you are thinking. I have a sort of vague unrest, and I almost wish I were in the front line again. There you don't get time to think too much of home, but here where you do see a few girls you long for the girls in the States. Since I have been in this place I have censored over two hundred letters. I am getting to be quite a clerk, and as for deciphering other men's handwriting, I am getting to be a genius at that. Let me hear from you often for I do love to get your dear letters.

Always,

VINTON.

July 9.

DEAR SISTER PEGGY :

What a wonderful little sister you

are, and what devoted admirers you have scattered all over—and there is one somewhere in France who thinks you are just about perfect. I am surely fortunate to have such people as yourself and mother and Louise to think about while I am here. They say the people you associate with show what you are. Well, it is true in the sense that they can make or break you, and hence it is just as true mentally of the people you think about, and I surely can thank God I have my friends to think about. Did I tell you I had received a Divisional Citation for what I did in the first American attack? I think I will put on my service chevron in another week now. I have been six months in the zone entitling a man to wear one. Again I am out of the trenches, and now I am trying to get some snap into the platoon. I wish I had some of it myself. I am so clumsy I trip over my own feet if I am not careful. It needs a man who has had years of training to train other men. Sometimes I do feel discouraged and feel that I am absolutely rotten at leading the men, and then comes along a little bit of encouragement

which helps. Just remember, Peggy dear, that whatever happens you have been one of the greatest inspirations I have had.

Always your very devoted brother,

PINK.

July 12.

MOTHER DEAREST :

I could almost write Paris at the head of this letter, for on Bastile Day I expect I shall review there with the selection from this Division. There are only a few from the entire Division, so I feel extremely honored, not only that I was picked, but having lost out once at a toss for going, another position was found on the Staff, and I may parade mounted. Of course this is mere anticipation, and until something has actually taken place in the army, there is no valid foundation for it. I have reorganized my platoon, and it is a difficult task, for I dislike to hurt any man's feelings, but you have to do it for the good of the whole. I think of you constantly and long to be back again where I can look at you, and yet this is the place where I should be, and I am proud to be here.

Sometimes I think it is a great deal better to be a private in the ranks than a second lieutenant, but this work has to be done, and I shall continue to try and do it to the best of my ability. I am getting to be rather large without realizing it, for I see men that I think are large, and I find that I am bigger than they are. What a tremendous cause we are fighting for, and how seldom we think of the big issues at stake. That is, some of us over here! We see the small things in such an all-important light. I will finish this letter in Paris. Heaps of love, and love to grandmother.

VINTON.

P. S. I will tell you about the Parade later. I was in it with flying colors. "Vive les Americaines" was all you could hear, and we were smothered with bouquets. I was on a horse at the head of the column acting as a Staff Officer. "Beaucoup honor" for little Pink! Heaps of love, and it was all for you, Darlingest.

VINTON.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: MAY 2001

Preservation Technologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 007 690 382 7

